

LOCKE AVENUE BRIDGE,
BRIDGE TENDER'S HOUSE
East side of Locke Avenue,
12 feet south of Locke Avenue Bridge
Swedesboro
Gloucester County
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-110-A

HAER
NJ
8-SWEBO,
2A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service

Northeast Region

Philadelphia Support Office

U.S. Custom House

200 Chestnut Street

Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
LOCKE AVENUE BRIDGE, BRIDGE TENDER'S HOUSE
HAER No. NJ-110-A

HAER
NJ
8-SWET30,
2A-

Location: East side of Locke Avenue, 12 feet south of Locke Avenue Bridge
Swedesboro
Gloucester County, New Jersey

UTM: 18.472840.4400380
Quad: Bridgeport, New Jersey, 1:24,000

Date of Construction: Circa 1890

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Present Owner: County of Gloucester
1 North Broad Street
Woodbury, New Jersey 08096

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Bridge Tender's House is significant for its association with the adjoining highway crossing carrying Locke Avenue over Raccoon Creek. The construction of the house circa 1890 corresponded with the first bridge built at this crossing in 1887. The house continued to be occupied and improved by bridge tenders who operated the present bridge, which was constructed in 1911.

Project Information: This documentation was undertaken in the Fall of 1996 in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration and the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Officer as a mitigative measure prior to bridge replacement.

Rebecca A. Hunt
Cultural Resources Group
Kise Franks & Straw, Inc.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Description of the Bridge Tender's House:

The Bridge Tender's House is located on Locke Avenue, approximately twelve feet south of the Locke Avenue Bridge (HAER No. NJ-110), in the northwest corner of the Borough of Swedesboro, Gloucester County, New Jersey. The perimeter of the house is defined by the creek bank on the north, the road six feet from the west elevation, and a large sycamore tree on the south. East of the house is an animal hutch and an outhouse. Southeast of the house is a two-story frame dwelling on the corner of Locke Avenue and West Broad Street.

The Bridge Tender's House was constructed circa 1890 to provide shelter for operators of the first movable span bridge at this crossing, which was built in 1887.¹ The original house was a one-story, two-room frame structure with a gable roof. The first known bridge tender to live in the building was James Taylor.² Taylor resigned in 1908 and William Passwater became the bridge tender. On 16 April 1908, Mr. and Mrs. Passwater received authorization from the borough to enlarge the house by one room.³ This addition lengthened the house to the north. With the increased space, the Passwaters used the south room as a small store, where they sold candy and tobacco. The Passwaters continued to serve as bridge tenders after the first bridge was demolished and replaced by the present bridge in 1911.

After William Passwater's death in 1922, Franklin Pierce Barber and his wife moved into the house and attended to the opening and closing of the bridge. In 1932, Peter K. Leap became the fourth bridge tender, and he lived in the house for eighteen years. Following Leap's death in 1950, Charles Magin was the bridge tender. Magin owned property and a house north of the Locke Avenue Bridge so he did not live in the Bridge Tender's House. According to oral tradition, Magin and his sons ran down the hill and operated the bridge when vessels sounded their horns. The Bridge Tender's House is believed to have been unoccupied during the thirteen years Magin was bridge tender.

The fifth and last bridge tender was James Scott. He and his wife Virginia became responsible for operating the bridge and moved into the house after Magin's death in 1963. Even though the bridge was fixed in a closed position in 1971 and a bridge tender was no longer needed, the Scotts continued to occupy the house. In 1981, James Scott died, and Virginia remained in the house for several years as its last resident.

The Bridge Tender's House is a one-story, three-bay by one-bay, frame dwelling with an asphalt-shingled gable roof and concrete block foundation. The overall dimensions of the house are 34'-10" long and 10'-5" wide. The original section of the house is 22'-7" long and 10'-5" wide and includes the south two rooms. The 1908 addition maintains the same width as the original building and extends 12'-3" beyond the original north elevation. An attic storage space spans the entire house in the peak of the gable roof. A crawlspace extends under the original house, while the addition has a full basement, accessed from the exterior. There are three courses

¹ Unless otherwise noted, information about construction chronology was obtained from building analysis conducted by Rebecca A. Hunt and Martin B. Abbot of Kise Franks & Straw on 18 September 1996 and 16 October 1996.

² Information about bridge tenders was obtained from: Jack Adams, Telephone Interviews by Rebecca A. Hunt, 27 September 1996, 1 October 1996, and 18 October 1996. The majority of Jack Adam's information is from extensive research he conducted in the *Woodbury Constitution*, the local newspaper. Mr. Adams obtained dates of death from records at the Gloucester County Historical Society in Woodbury, New Jersey.

³ Jack Adams, Telephone Interview by Rebecca A. Hunt, 27 September 1996.

of concrete block that compose the crawlspace walls and sit on top of the 1908 basement walls. This juxtaposition of the same masonry walls under the oldest section, but on top of the 1908 foundation, suggests that the building was raised and stabilized with three new courses of masonry in the twentieth century after the addition was constructed.

The exterior of the house is distinguished by a steeply-pitched gable roof, asphalt imitation red brick siding, and an exposed concrete block foundation. Both the original section and the addition have wood clapboards under the imitation brick siding. A seam with a vertical board dividing the clapboards of the two sections is extant on the east elevation under the asphalt siding. The east and west elevations are symmetrical, each with two windows and a door. Minor differences between these elevations are a concrete stoop in front of the west door and a red brick flue between the east door and the middle window. The east elevation had a shed roof doorhood, but it has recently fallen off and is laying on the ground nearby. The north and south elevations are similar in appearance, with a window centered on the first floor. Predominant differences between these gable-end elevations are the exposed full-basement with a three-light casement window on the north elevation, and a four-light casement attic window on the south elevation. All first floor windows have six-over-six double-hung sash and modern storm windows; except the north window where the sash has been removed. The sash in the three windows of the original house have molded muntins. The muntins in the north addition have plain pointed profiles. The two exterior doors are identical, and are characterized by four lights in the upper half, two horizontal panels in the lower half, and modern aluminum storm doors. All exterior trim is plain and unmolded.

The interior of the house is divided into three rooms of similar size on the first floor and one room in the basement. There are no surviving interior doors. The south first floor room measures 9'-4" wide and 9'-6" long and was last used as the kitchen. This utilitarian room is finished with square linoleum tile flooring, a 5" high unmolded baseboard, painted wallboard nailed to plaster walls, plain wood trim around the windows and doorways, and a painted and papered ceiling. The only extant fixtures are a large porcelain sink on the east wall just north of the doorway and a metal lighting fixture in the center of the ceiling.

The middle first floor room measures 9'-0" wide and 11'-2" long and is more finely detailed than the other rooms. This simple ornamentation includes a 6 1/2" high wood baseboard with a rounded top edge, chamfered trim around the windows and south doorway, and a two-bulb central lighting fixture with an imprinted decorative pattern. The floor is covered with multiple layers of sheet linoleum of various patterns, including a floral motif on the bottom layer and a geometric design on the top. The walls and ceiling are finished with painted plaster on wood lath. In the former location of a stove in the southeast corner, there is a footprint for the stove hearth, protective composition board covering the baseboard, and a circular flue connection hole in the east wall. The only closet in the house is located on the west wall of the middle room between the window and the south partition. The closet is enclosed by beaded board partitions and has one interior shelf, various types of sheet linoleum lining the walls, and hinges on the north end of the doorway where a door once hung. The doorway between the middle and north first floor rooms was originally an exterior doorway. It has a threshold extending into the north room covered with a pebble-patterned linoleum, plain trim, and a multiple-light transom, with no extant glazing, enclosed by wide vertical boards.

The north first floor room and basement are part of the 1908 addition. The first floor room measures 9'-3" wide and 11'-8" long. The finishes in the room include two layers of sheet

linoleum flooring with floral patterns, a 5 3/4" high plain baseboard, and painted plaster walls and ceiling. The trim is plain on the east and west windows and the doorway to the middle room. The north window trim is chamfered and matches the window trim in the middle room, suggesting it was re-used from another location on the original building. Directly below the north first floor room is the basement with a dirt floor, an unpainted composition board ceiling, an exterior doorway with a board-and-batten door on the east wall, and a small opening in the south wall for access into the crawlspace. A stacked concrete block pier in the center of the crawlspace provides additional structural support for the south, first floor interior partition.

The building is currently boarded closed and vacant. The exterior and interior finishes are in poor condition from water damage and lack of maintenance. Significant structural deterioration has occurred on the roof where a large branch from the adjoining tree has fallen and damaged the sheathing, and at the west wall in the basement where there are several stress cracks through the masonry.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Interviews:

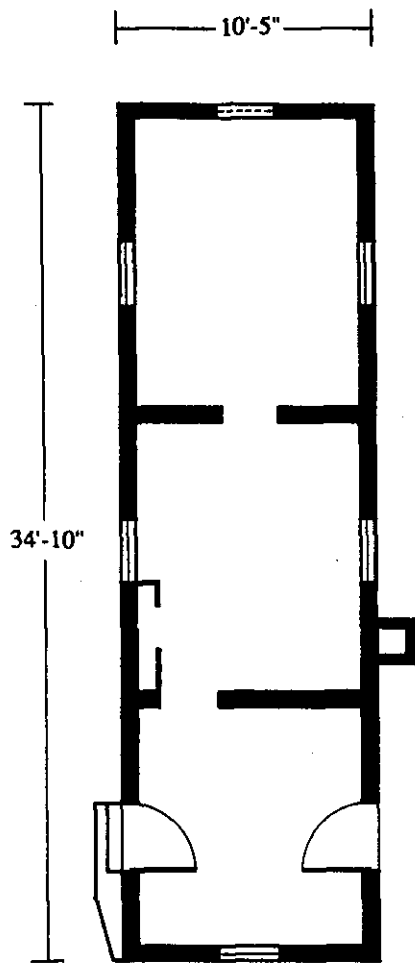
Adams, Jack. Telephone Interviews by Rebecca A. Hunt. 27 September 1996, 1 October 1996, and 18 October 1996. (Jack Adams is a Swedesboro Historian who has done extensive research compiling information from the *Woodbury Constitution*, the local newspaper.)

Bibliography:

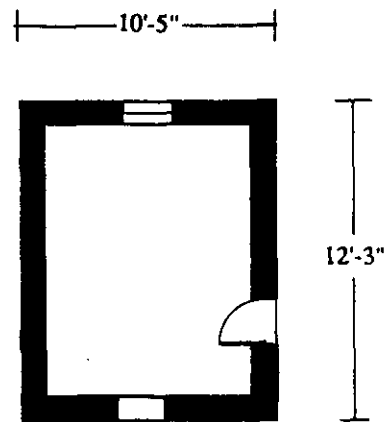
1. Primary and unpublished sources:

A. G. Lichtenstein & Associates, Inc., "The New Jersey Historic Bridge Survey - Draft." 1994. On file at the Bureau of Environmental Analysis, New Jersey Department of Transportation, Trenton, New Jersey.

U.S. Congress. House. Secretary of War. *Raccoon Creek, New Jersey*. 63rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1914. Doc. 800. On file at the Technical Library, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN



North

SKETCH FLOOR PLANS
(Not To Scale)